

BAYFIELD COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES BOARD MEETING

EOC & Virtual
September 28, 2023

DRAFT:
Subject to change at
the next BCDHS
meeting

Board Members Present: Jeremy Oswald, James Crandall, Patrick Irvine, Marty Milanowski, Mary Dougherty (arrived at 4:04 p.m.), Sue Rosa*
(*attended virtually)

Not Present: Lona Schmidt, Stephanie Haskins-Defoe, Madelaine Rekemeyer

Others Present: Elizabeth Skulan, Jeanine Spuhler, Stephanie Eder, Sarah Traaholt, Carrie Linder

Call to Order and Introductions

Crandall called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Introductions were not necessary.

Opportunity for Public Comment (Limit 3 minutes please.)

No Public Comment

Discussion and Possible Action – Review and approval of the August 17, 2023, meeting minutes.

Motion by Milanowski, seconded by Irvine to approve the August 17, 2023, meeting minutes.
Motion passed.

Program Presentation – Update on Unwinding Efforts in Economic Support Services, Economic Support Manger Services Section Manager Jeanine Spuhler

Spuhler reviewed the information related to the Public Assistance Benefits unwinding in the Northern Income Maintenance Consortium (NIMC). Information was presented for NIMC and for each individual county in the consortium. Spuhler responded to questions.

Spuhler explained NIMC is made up of twelve counties and sixty-two workers. Fifty workers take calls on the call center. Twelve workers don't regularly take calls. They process intake/renewals and work on benefit recovery. Six workers are in Bayfield County. One Bayfield County worker is still in training. Two Bayfield County workers also process energy assistance applications. NIMC is fortunate to have been assigned two state hired limited-term employees who assist with the extra workflow from unwinding.

Spuhler noted workloads continue to increase during unwinding. Callers are more emotional, and calls are more challenging for workers. The transition has been difficult for participants and NIMC workers alike, particularly as some workers and participants have never had to follow pre-pandemic procedures and guidelines.

Spuhler reported February was the last month that emergency benefits were received for FoodShare. FoodShare benefits have been reduced statewide by nearly half. There are many program changes affecting and reducing participation and enrollment.

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There has been a positive change to the childcare rules. Childcare benefits will now be available for parents attending school. Childcare participation counts are limited in Bayfield County due to lack of providers.

NIMC staff must process applications and renewals on a timely basis. This is a performance measure. Healthcare applications must be processed within thirty days. NIMC is currently 95% timely, which exceeds the state requirements.

There has been a decrease in enrollment for healthcare. This is due to various factors, many related to unwinding. The state is issuing and mailing warning letters to participants who are in danger of losing their healthcare coverage. NIMC will see an added increase in referrals when the Federal Marketplace opens.

Spuhler stated that overall unwinding is going as well as can be expected. She noted the NIMC workers are tough, caring, and resilient.

Monthly Section Reports

Support Services – Stephanie Eder

- Eder reported the employee health insurance premium increase for 2024 was estimated at 10%, 7% less than actual, which is 17%. Adjustments to the DHS budget will be needed to accommodate the extra expense. Eder is working with the County Finance Director on final numbers for the 2024 DHS budget.
- Eder attended a demonstration this week facilitated by Information Technology (IT) for a proposed intranet. An intranet is a private network used by an organization. Its primary purpose is to help employees securely communicate with each other and store information. The site can be accessed by Bayfield County employees from any location. IT is seeking suggestions from departments as they develop this resource.
- Finance and accounting staff attended a Tyler Enterprise demonstration. This accounting software product could replace the County's current accounting software, New World. Human Services is also seeking a replacement for the Department's accounting software, WISSIS, which is no longer supported. DHS has accounting needs the county's system is unable to meet, which has made it difficult to find a replacement. Eder noted that DHS financial staff will also be attending another financial software demonstration from another provider next week.
- Eder noted that the newest Support Services staff member, Angie Lazorik, is a great addition to the team. Angie fits in very well.

Behavioral Health & Community Programs – Elizabeth Skulan for Tom Croteau

- Croteau provided training on the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) substance use disorder assessment model specific to the new electronic health record. Chris Beirl and Vanessa Sowl are independently completing assessments in the new system. Stephanie Tutor hopes to have her Substance Abuse Counselor in Training (SAC-IT) in the next few months as well. All her paperwork has been submitted to Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS).

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- Implementation of the new electronic health record (HER) software, Echo Vantage, continues to be a challenge. The regional CCS team has been working with the software provider and other counties using the software to problem solve.
- Croteau noted CCS remains very busy. Staff schedules are reaching maximum capacity. Croteau said staff are eagerly awaiting the county's approval to hire new staff to help alleviate stress and prevent burnout.
- Two clinical providers within Northland Counseling are in the process of purchasing the business from Carol Lund's estate. As a result, the services should remain unchanged. This is good news for the community, who will not lose the service and for the county, who will retain the provider.
- Croteau met with law enforcement, DHS staff, Corporation Counsel, Memorial Medical Center (MMC) staff, and Behavioral Health Unit staff on September 25, 2023, at MMC to discuss the process for emergency detentions. The time was well spent, and the group will meet next spring to follow up.
- Behavioral Health Case Managers, Jamie Allen and Hailey BeBeau attended the state Crisis Conference in Wisconsin Dells last week.
- Croteau is attending the State's Behavioral Health Training Partnership Administrator's meeting and Ethics and Boundaries training tomorrow at Steven's Point.

Aging & Disability (A&D) Services – Carrie Linder

- Linder and Marianne Johnson are providing coverage for the Senior Nutrition and Transportation Programs while Carolyn Novak and Michele Reiswig are on vacation.
- The Barnes Congregate site has reopened. Novak and Linder have been working to ensure everything is in place for the new congregate meal coordinator.
- Linder reports that she is monitoring enrollment in the disability benefits specialist program. Sawyer County provided notice last month that their Disability Benefit Specialist (DBS) accepted a new position and Sawyer County was no longer interested in employing the DBS position. The position will be posted in Price County. In the meantime, Linder is working with Sawyer County, the state, and the Bayfield County DBS Jamie Mackin during the transition. Mackin's caseload prohibits him from working with the cases throughout the five-county region. However, Linder noted there is a plan in place until the new DBS is hired.
- Linder attended an ADRC staff supervisors meeting. All counties indicated the volume of calls to the ADRC have increased due to the unwinding.
- Linder reported Lindi Olson is processing three functional screens and appointments for new referrals are taking approximately two weeks.
- DHS policy requires calls to be returned within one business day. Linder reported it is proving increasingly difficult to return calls within that timeframe.
- Linder reported the ADRC allocation statewide for 2024 is higher. However, the allocation may or may not be different for the ADRC-N. A group at the state level is working on a new formula to equalize the generations of ADRC. ADRC-N is a third generation ADRC, so is very poorly funded compared to earlier generations. More information should be available in October.
- The next Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC) meeting will be held Monday, October 2, 2023. Several items need to be reviewed for 2024. An update to the five-year regional transportation plan is due this fall. Northwest Regional Planning Commission will take the lead on developing the plan.

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Family Services – Elizabeth Skulan for Mary Anich

- The Child Abuse Response Effort (CARE) team meetings have been reinstated. CARE is a standardized process developed jointly by Human Services, law enforcement, Indian Child Welfare, and the District Attorney's office for interviewing children who may have been victims of abuse or neglect. The group hopes to expand the pool of forensic interviewers in Bayfield County to include more law enforcement and Red Cliff Indian Child Welfare program staff.
- Anich reported there have been numerous calls after hours to on-call staff in the past few weeks. Most of the calls have not been child welfare related. Staff are often asked to troubleshoot mental health, substance abuse, homeless situations, adult protective services/dementia issues, and heating and fuel emergencies in colder months. Staff do their best to offer suggestions. However, staff are only on-call for child protective services. They are not trained or mandated to respond to crises in other areas. As a result, most of these calls must wait until the next business day for outreach from other parts of the agency or for a connection to a community agency. Heating and fuel related crisis calls are routed to the Economic Support Supervisor.
- Staff have had several challenging cases lately. Collaboration with law enforcement, the schools, DA's office, public defender's office, behavioral health programming, Child Indian Welfare programs from both Red Cliff and Bad River, and families has been very positive.
- Anich reported a youth who was moved to a residential placement in April has returned to Lincoln Hills. Unfortunately, this youth will likely age out of the system from Lincoln Hills in early 2024. Unfortunately, there were no other placement options for this youth either in Wisconsin or nationally.
- Anich reported that with cold and flu season, several staff have struggled with mild illness.
- Anich is on vacation until October 11, 2023. Ashland County DHHS is providing supervision to on-call staff. Thanks to Jerry Esala, Ashland County Child Welfare supervisor, and Bayfield County Administration for supporting this unique partnership!

Economic Support Services – Jeanine Spuhler

- Maggie Morrison joined the Economic Support team on July 24, 2023. Morrison has completed new worker training and is currently job shadowing. Economic Support has extensive training that workers must complete prior to working independently on the call center. Morrison is doing well in her new position and is a good fit for the team.
- Spuhler stated NIMC continues to struggle with staffing issues. Three consortium staff recently left NIMC to work from home full-time for other consortia.
- Spuhler also noted NIMC is losing Income Maintenance workers to larger consortia that offer more money for performing the same job while allowing them to work completely from home. Spuhler is concerned about the trend.
- One staff member was out of the office for the month of September on leave.
- The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) 2023-2024 season begins October 1, 2023. Appointments are already booked into mid-October. Emergency situations for

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households that include children under six or the elderly must be responded to within eighteen hours. Bayfield County generally responds immediately.

Monthly Reports

Monthly Financial and Training reports were reviewed and retained.

2024 Budget Update

The DHS 2024 Budget was increased by \$1,000,000 per the instructions by Baker Tilley, the County's auditor for the Children's Long-Term Services (CLTS), the result of a change in accounting practice. An update of the 2024 DHS Budget Narrative with changes was included in the board packet. The budget and narrative do not include adjustments to wage and fringe due to changes that were made once Departments had submitted their budget.

Discussion and Possible Action – Memorandum of Understanding with Red Cliff Indian Child Welfare Development

Documents that support day to day operations, such as provider contracts and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with partner agencies, are not generally presented to the Human Services Board for approval due to its status as a policy making board. However, the Red Cliff Tribe requested this MOU be formally approved. It will also be recommended by Indian Child Welfare and their legal counsel for approval by the Red Cliff Tribal Council. The document has been reviewed by corporation counsel who had no objections to having it approved by the DHS Board.

Motion by Milanowski, seconded by Oswald to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Red Cliff Indian Child Welfare. Motion passed.

Recruitment for Citizen Member for the Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) Local and Regional Coordination Committees –

There is a vacancy on the local and regional Bayfield County CCS Coordination Committees. The individual should be a community member interested in services that are provided to individuals across the age span with mental health issues and/or substance use disorders.

Skulan noted that meetings are quarterly, run concurrently, and are held during the workday.

Skulan also noted there is a vacancy on the Family Services/Behavioral Health & Community Programs Advisory Committee.

2024 DHS Proposed Meeting Dates

A list of proposed meeting dates was included in the board packet. To meet the deadlines the County establishes for the 2025 budget, the July and August meetings will be combined. The date for the

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meeting, which will be scheduled in August, is not included in the proposed list of dates. Once the date Departments must submit the 2025 budget is known, the date will be determined. To reduce the number of meetings and encourage a quorum around the holidays, the November and December meetings are also combined.

Review and Discuss in the Red: Digging deeper into the Eau Claire County Sheriff's Office investigation into DHS.

Skulan summarized the article regarding allegations of misappropriation of funds in the Eau Claire County Human Services Department. She also reviewed the outcome of the forensic audit completed after the results of the investigation were made public. No charges were filed, no criminal intent was found, and no employee was subject to disciplinary procedures because of the incident. The investigation stemmed from a simple but very large accounting error made when the Department was projecting a deficit for fiscal 2019. Skulan noted that news stories are often sensationalized and do not necessarily provide all the information or both sides of the story.

Skulan noted that though there were no criminal charges filed, and no case could be made for criminal intent, there will most likely be repercussions to all Human Services Departments around the State in the coming years as audits are conducted. Bayfield County has checks and balances in place, but additional changes to policies and procedure may be recommended in the future to strengthen practice.

Other (Informational Items)

- A. Email from Economic Support Supervisor Denise Jeffers, Wood County, with positive feedback regarding Katy Hansen, Bayfield County Economic Support Specialist
- B. Thank you note from a recipient of Wisconsin Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP)

Future Meetings

- October 26, 2023
- November/December - December 5, 2023 (Meeting starts at 3:30 with a holiday potluck)
- January 25, 2024

Crandall Adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

Submitted by Sarah Traaholt, Clerk III